



## **United States Mission to the OSCE**

### **Response to High Commissioner for National Minorities, Rolf Ekeus**

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Paul W. Jones  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
May 12, 2005

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States warmly welcomes High Commissioner Ekeus back to the Permanent Council today. We thank him for providing us with a comprehensive update on his recent and planned activities to address the range of pressing concerns relating to national minorities across the OSCE sphere.

We strongly support the High Commissioner's continued focus on Central Asia, and his efforts to promote peace and stability in the region through the integration of minorities. His recent dialogue with Turkmen authorities on ways to enhance integration through education is a positive step forward in resolving the issues related to the status of minority citizens in Turkmenistan.

In Kyrgyzstan, while we welcome the recent democratic breakthrough, we understand that the uncertainties of profound political transformation present a special challenge with regard to ensuring the safety and enfranchisement of national minorities. We applaud the High Commissioner's immediate engagement in Kyrgyzstan and fully share his assessment that guaranteeing adequate political representation for minorities will be a critical element in securing comprehensive and lasting stability.

Providing Uzbek-speaking children in Kazakhstan with the multi-lingual skills they need to successfully compete for access to higher education is an excellent example of strengthening minority participation through education. We welcome the high-level of cooperation between the High Commissioner and the Government of Kazakhstan that made this initiative a success.

The Balkans is another region in which the ongoing personal engagement of the High Commissioner is of high value to authorities seeking to forge more stable relations between ethnically diverse regions and communities. Ensuring appropriate representation of all ethnicities in the political and judicial spheres will be key to this process.

We encourage the High Commissioner's continued involvement in assisting governments to develop and implement important legislation, such as Croatia's Constitutional Law on the Rights of National Minorities, that provide for the protection and integration of national minorities.

We welcome the High Commissioner's decision to turn his attention to the status of inter-ethnic relations in Kosovo, and fully encourage his further engagement in that region.

We recognize the High Commissioner's constructive efforts, in close cooperation with the OSCE Mission in Skopje, to assist Macedonian authorities in implementing equitable minority representation in public institutions in accordance with the Ohrid Framework Agreement.

Turning to the Caucasus, we note that the Georgian government, with the encouragement of the high office of the High Commissioner, is making efforts to deal responsibly with the Armenian community in the Samtskhe-Javakheti region.

Finally, the United States welcomes the fact that the High Commissioner was able to return to Turkey this past February to renew discussions on minorities issues with officials in Ankara. We encourage him to build on this access to further his efforts in assisting Turkey as it addresses concerns related to its national minorities.

In closing, I would like to once again thank Commissioner Ekeus and his staff for their tireless work in carrying out the commitment of the OSCE to protect national minorities, promote tolerance and encourage social integration. To do this across a sphere as large, as diverse, and as complex as ours is indeed, no small undertaking. We offer him our full support and wish him continued success in his endeavors.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.